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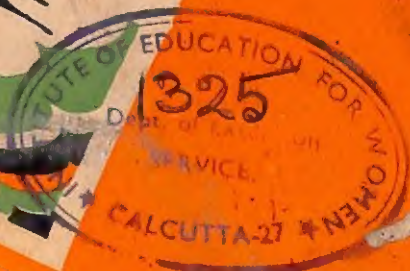
THE SILVER FISH AND THE STOWAWAY



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Men

By

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THE SILVER FISH

Once there was a poor fisherman. He lived in a little stone hut on the seashore. Because he was so poor, he lived all alone. He was too poor to keep a servant. He was too poor to take a wife.

Each morning very early he walked

to market. There he sold his fish. With the money he got, he bought some food. Then he walked back to his little stone hut.

Each day he cooked his simple meal. Each day he swept and cleaned the hut till it shone like a new pin.

When evening came he used to go down to the sea. He untied his boat and set off over the water. When he had rowed a good way out, he put down his oars. He took his line, put some bait on the hook and started to fish. He would stay till he had enough fish to sell in the market.

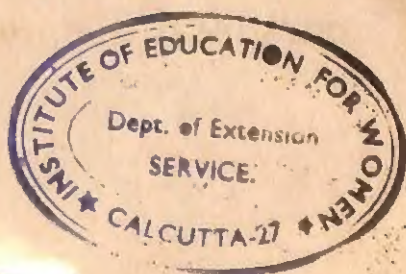
One evening he had no luck. He could not catch a single fish. It grew dark, and the moon rose, and still the



fisherman had caught nothing. He fished and fished until at last he had only one piece of bait left.

“This is my last chance,” said the fisherman.

He put the last piece of bait on the hook and cast his line. Then he leant over the side of the boat and waited.



Suddenly he spied a fish. The fisherman had never seen one like it before. It was a shining silver fish, so bright that it shed a little light all around.

Snap! went the jaws of the silver fish. It had taken the bait on the line. The fisherman pulled it in and took it off the hook.

The fish lay in his hand. It was the strangest creature. It had wide blue fins and violet eyes. On its head was a silver crest. It shone more brightly than a bed of glow-worms.

"I shall never sell this one in the market," thought the fisherman. "I will take it home with me for company."



So he put the fish in a can of water and took it home.

The next morning he did not go to market, for he had nothing to sell. Instead, he found a glass bowl. He put sand and shells at the bottom, with big stones to give shade. He planted seaweeds here and there among the stones.

Then he put in the silver fish. It looked charming. When night came, it looked even more charming. The fish shone like a lamp in the bowl. The fisherman lay in bed looking at it. He felt happier than ever before.

“Good-night, little friend,” he said.

The next night when the fisherman came in, he went at once to look at his fish. Its light did not seem as bright as before. However, it was still very lovely. The fisherman fell asleep watching it.

But the next night the fisherman saw a big change. The fish gave only a poor light. It moved slowly in the bowl. The fisherman grew anxious. He had grown to love the



silver fish. He could not bear to see his little friend so poorly. As he got into bed he wondered what to do.

The next night he hurried home from fishing. He went straight to the bowl. The fish lay at the bottom. Its light was only a dull glow.

The fisherman was heartbroken. He knelt by the bowl and put his arms round it.

"Little friend! Little friend!" he cried.

The fish lay looking at him, opening and shutting its mouth.

"It looks as if it is speaking," thought the fisherman.

He pressed his ear to the bowl and listened. Sure enough, there was a tiny sound. The fisherman held his breath. What was his little friend saying?

"Rock-a-nore, Rock-a-nore, Rock-a-nore," was what he heard, over and over again.

The fisherman was puzzled. He listened a long time that night, but he heard nothing more.

The next day at the market, the fisherman spoke to some friends.



“Do you know of something called Rock-a-nore?” he asked them.

“It is a tall rock in the middle of the sea,” they said. “But very few men have seen it.”

The fisherman hurried home. He put the bowl in his boat and set off over the sea. He rowed and rowed till the evening. At last, far away, he spied a tall rock.

"That must be Rock-a-nore," he said to himself.

So he rowed and rowed to the tall rock. By the time he got there it was quite dark.

"What shall I do now?" thought the fisherman.

The fish lay still at the bottom of the bowl. Its light was so feeble that he could hardly see it.

The fisherman began to row round the rock. Soon he came to a little cove. Looking into it he saw a glimmer of light. So he rowed his boat into the cove. As he went in the light grew brighter.

At last he found himself in a large pool. Big rocks arched over it. There was hardly a ripple on the water.



But the most lovely sight was below. In the water were crowds of silver fish like his own. The light they gave made the floor of the cove as bright as a ballroom. The fish darted to and fro, flashing their silver crests, and twinkling their blue fins.

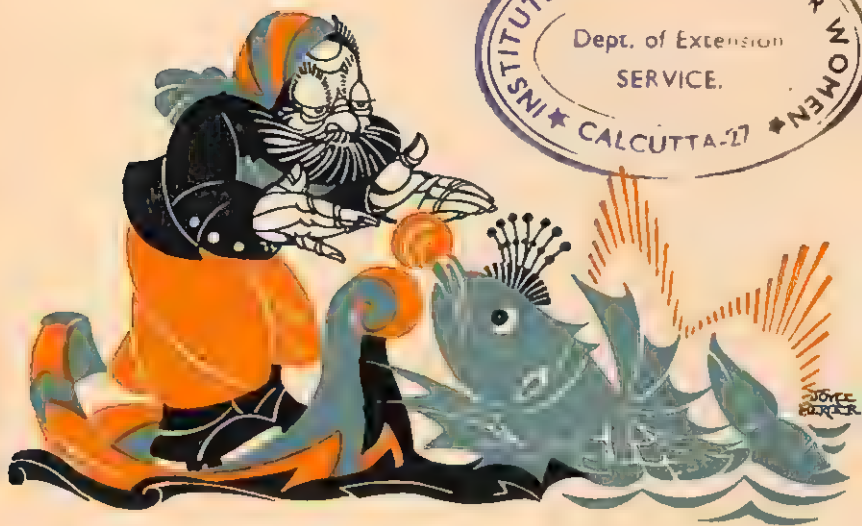
The fisherman gazed and gazed. Then he took up the bowl and poured his silver fish into the water. At once its light shone as before. With a whisk of its tail it shot away.

The fisherman sighed.

"Goodbye, little friend," he cried.

Then he picked up his oars to row home. As he came to the mouth of the cove he looked back. He could still see the glimmer of the fishes. Suddenly a tiny light came out from them. It drew nearer and nearer to the fisherman. It was his own silver fish!

The fisherman cried out with joy. He leant over the end of the boat. The fish held something in its mouth. It was a shell. When it reached the



boat the fish reared itself out of the water.

The fisherman put out his hand and took the shell. Then with a quick turn the fish swam away. In a few moments it was gone.

The fisherman rowed slowly home. It was morning when he came to the hut. He had no fish to sell at the

market. He was so tired that he went to bed and fell fast asleep.

He awoke with the shell still in his hand. It was a common oyster. The fisherman felt very sad. He missed his little friend. The corner where the bowl had stood looked so empty. He had only the oyster to console him.

"It will at least make a breakfast for me," said the fisherman.

But when he opened the oyster he found inside it a great pearl.

"Oh-ho!" cried the fisherman. "Thank you, little friend."

And he put on his coat, put the pearl in his pocket and set off for the village. He took the pearl to the silversmith.



“This is the finest pearl I have ever seen,” said the silversmith. “I will pay you one hundred pounds for it.”

So the fisherman gave him the pearl, and the silversmith gave him one hundred pounds for it.

With some of the money he bought a trim little cottage in the

village. He left his stone hut for ever, and went to live in the cottage. It was so pretty. It had white walls, a red roof and a little green door. In the summer the roses grew up by the walls and poked their heads in through the windows. He took a little servant, too, to keep his cottage tidy. She was such a good servant that he soon came to love her. He made her his wife, and a dear little wife she was. So he was not lonely any more again.

The fisherman often set out to sea to thank his little friend, but he never found Rock-a-nore again.



THE STOWAWAY

One Saturday afternoon Robert set off with his father, his mother and his Uncle Paul. They were all going to see the warship *Juno*. The *Juno* lay in the harbour. Robert had spied her grey funnels from his bedroom window.

Robert was only seven. He had

never seen a real warship before. He was so excited that he trotted along, panting like a little dog.

They came to the harbour, and there was the huge ship on the blue water. A crowd of people were waiting for a boat to take them over to the ship. Robert, his father and mother and Uncle Paul waited too. Soon the boat came alongside and the people got in. A sailor leant out of the boat to help Robert. There was no room for Uncle Paul; he had to wait for the next boat.

Then the sailors took the oars and rowed them across the harbour. To Robert it was like a splendid dream. He dabbed his hand in the dancing waves as they went along.



When they reached the ship, her grey sides rose high above the little boat. They had to climb up on a rope ladder.

"Can you manage it, sonny?" asked the sailor.

"Rather!" replied Robert. And he went up the ladder as easily as a cat climbs.

When Robert got to the top he

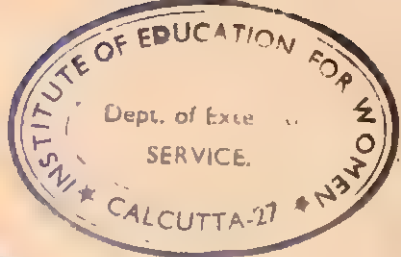
was too happy to speak. An officer showed them round the ship. Robert admired his smart uniform and shiny buttons. How he longed to go to sea! He peered into every corner and poked the coils of rope. In the engine-room sailors were busy getting up more steam, for the *Juno* was to sail that evening.

After half an hour the officer brought them back to where they started. Robert did not want to leave so soon.

"May I come back with Uncle Paul in the next boat?" he asked.

"Very well, but don't get lost," said his father, as he went down the ladder.

Robert turned back to find Uncle



Paul. He peeped into the open lockers and rooms as he went by. No one was about. He found a stairway and went down it. He thought it might be a short cut to the other side of the ship. But the stairway led to a part he had not seen before.

Robert walked a little way, till he came to an open door. He went through it, but it led only to a huge locker. It was full of coils of rope, and flags neatly piled up. As he turned to go out, his foot caught in a rope. He tripped and fell on the door, which shut with a fearful bang.

Robert was not hurt; he scrambled to his feet and held his breath. He knew he would be sent off in disgrace if someone found him prying.

He waited some minutes, but no footsteps came near. Then he stepped softly to the door. It was dark in the locker, and he felt with both hands for the handle. But he could not find it. He stood on the tips of



his toes and reached up as high as he could. Then he ran his hands right down to the bottom of the door. Then he knew. The door had no handle on the inside!

Robert felt cold and trembly all over. He was locked in. He forgot how much he wanted to be a sailor. He only knew that he *must* get out of

that dark cupboard. He hammered on the door with his fists and shouted at the top of his voice. But the sound of the engines was louder than his voice. Nobody came near. He yelled and he knocked. Nobody answered. At last, tired out, he groped his way to a pile of ropes. There he lay down and fell asleep.

When he awoke it was pitch dark. Robert dared not move. He did not even know where the door lay. The sound of the engines was louder than before. And there was another sound, a new sound—*swish-swish, swish-swish*. Robert knew what it meant. They were at sea! By this time his father and mother would know that he was lost. Robert



laid his face on his arms and sobbed.

He awoke to find himself staring into a blaze of sunlight. A sailor had opened the door of the locker.

"*Well!*" said the sailor. Then without more ado he grasped Robert by his collar. He dragged him out of the locker, and along the deck.

Robert was taken in this way, only

half-awake, before the captain. The captain was a gruff man. He was gruffer still when he heard how the sailor found Robert.

“Stowaway, eh?” he said.

“Oh no, sir!” cried Robert. “I didn’t mean to be left behind, I didn’t really. I fell over and slammed the door by mistake. I couldn’t make anyone hear. It was so noisy. And it was so dark. And I want to go home!” The tears trickled down Robert’s cheeks as he spoke.

The captain called two officers. They all stood looking at Robert and talking in low voices.

At last the captain came over to Robert and took him by the arm. His gruff voice was more kindly.



“Now, see here, my boy. We call at Portsmouth in two days, and there we will put you ashore. You can get home from there. In the meantime you must do a job of work, as all sailors do. This officer will look after you.”

So Robert went away with the

officer, who just gave him a good breakfast. Then he set Robert to polish the brass fittings of the ship.

In this way Robert lived two days on a warship, just like a real sailor. They were the happiest days of his life. He was sorry when they drew near to Portsmouth.

But when he stepped on the gangway, he saw his father and mother and Uncle Paul standing at the bottom. He did not mind leaving the sea then.

He ran into his father's arms.

"How did you know I'd be here?" he cried.

"That is one of the uses of wireless," replied his father.

EXERCISES

THE SILVER FISH

1. What happened to the silver fish when the fisherman kept it in a glass bowl?
2. Tell what the silver fish did when the fisherman returned it to the sea.

THE STOWAWAY

1. Tell how Robert got left behind in the *Juno*.
2. What did Robert have to do while he was on the boat?
3. Tell how Robert's father knew that his son was safe.

LIST OF SERIES B.

- 1b. JENNY AND THE OLD HORSE
and ANOTHER OLD HORSE.
- 2b. JENNY IN THE BULL'S FIELD
and JENNY IN THE BLACKBERRY PIT.
- 3b. JENNY AND THE SWALLOWS.
- 4b. ALICE AND THE WHITE RABBIT
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- 5b. ALICE AND THE DEAR LITTLE PUPPY
and OTHER STORIES.
- 6b. ALICE AND THE MAD TEA-PARTY
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- 7b. THE OAK TREE and PADDY AMONG THE TULIPS.
- 8b. THE MAGIC WALKING-STICK
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- 10b. IN THE ATTIC and LITTLE JUMPING JOAN.
- 11b. THE GOLDEN SLIPPERS
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- 12b. THE VEGETABLE PIE
and THE RABBITS' CHRISTMAS PARTY.
- 13b. JACOB'S BIRTHDAY BREAKFAST
and THE MILKMAID.
- 14b. WHO LET THE CAT OUT OF THE BAG?
and HOW THE WOOD-PIGEON BUILT HER NEST.
- 15b. THE SILVER FISH and THE STOWAWAY.
- 16b. THE SURPRISING SEED.

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